



**Definition:** The term “Berber,” despite being used somewhat widely in English and on several mainstream websites, was identified as an offensive term referring to several of Libya’s ethnic minorities, namely the Imazighen/Amazigh, Tebu, and Tuareg peoples. Participants indicated that the word came into use following the start of Gaddafi’s rule in 1969, highlighting the extensive discrimination against minorities under his administration. The word itself has its origins in the Greek word for “foreigner” and is closely linked to the English word “barbarian.” In the Libyan context it implies that someone is uncivilized or primitive and is often used to describe a person or group of people who allegedly don’t speak Arabic or cannot speak it well. Some respondents also said that it is often used in situations where the person being targeted is viewed as being low class and aggressive in their behavior.

**Why it’s offensive and inflammatory:** This term is dehumanizing and defines those labeled as “Berber” as being inferior to other ethnic or racial groups. As one respondent in Sabha stated, “...when this term is used, what happens is that it places Arabs above them [ethnic minorities], as if Arabic culture is the predominant culture and Arabs in general have greater value than non-Arabs.” Another participant said that the use of the term may result in physical altercations between people of Arab origins and those of Amazigh origins. The term creates a division between Arab and non-Arab communities in Libya by degrading members of these minority groups and claiming that they are not equally Libyan, even if they have lived in the country for generations. This division was illustrated through some of the statements of focus group participants, as several individuals expressed opinions that members of the Amazigh ethnic group are racist and act superior to Libyan Arabs, claiming that they reject interethnic marriage. These comments appeared to be attempts to justify the use of divisive language related to discussions of ethnicity. There was, however, some disagreement over how inflammatory the term is, with some participants indicating that sometimes the term is used in ignorance and is not intended to offend or dehumanize anyone. Additionally, participants in Kufra stated that the term was not employed in their region of the country, perhaps due to the presence of Tebu communities throughout the area, against whom the term “abd” is more often used as derogatory speech.

**Non-offensive alternative terms:** *Imazighen/Amazigh; Tuareg; Tebu (depending on ethnic identity group); لبيبي* (English translation: *Libyan*)